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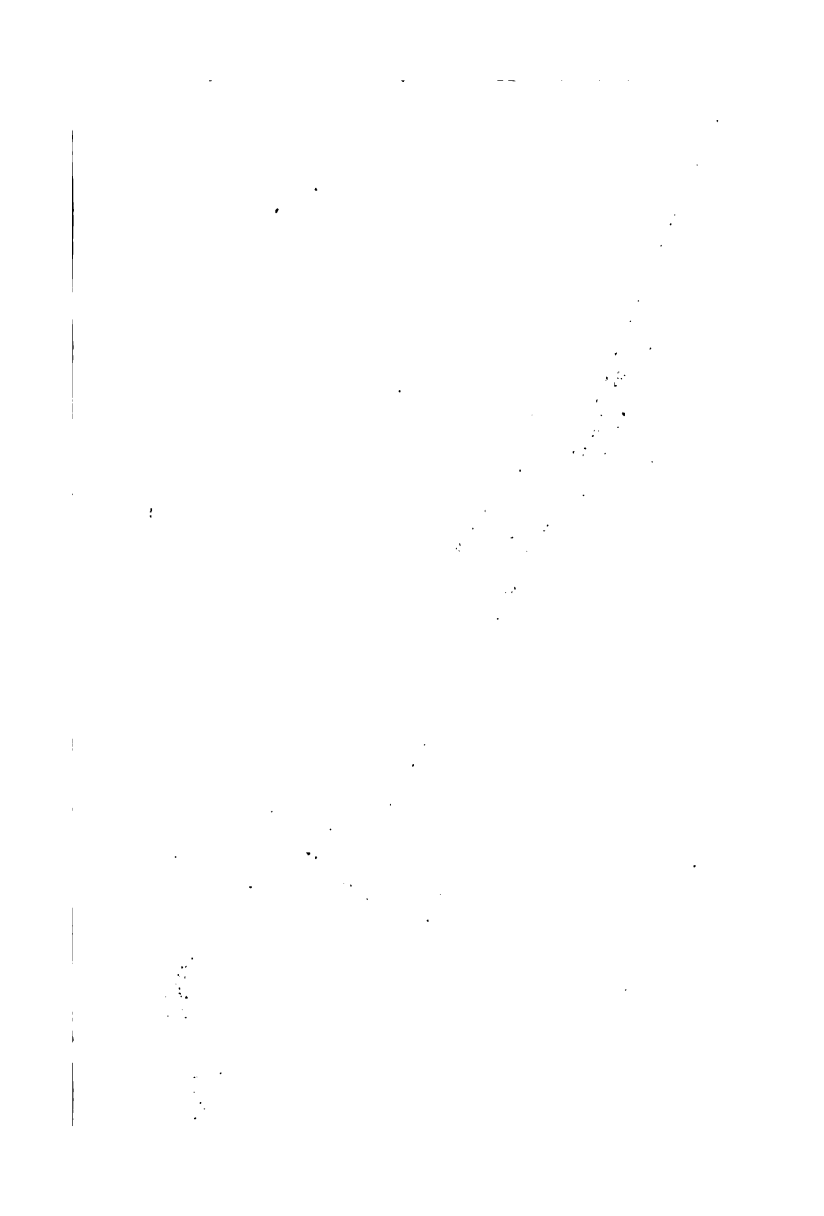
MUSINGS OF A PILGRIM

AT

JACOB'S WELL.



Mount Ebal Vale of Sychar Mount Gerizim

NABLOUS.

Sychar or Shechem

Mount Ebal Vale of Sychar Mount Gerizim

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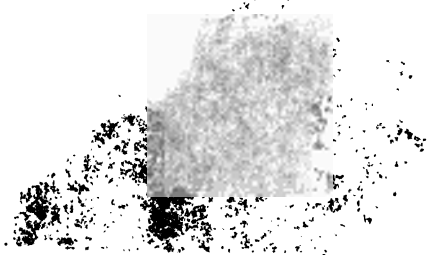

MUSINGS

OF A PILGRIM

AT

JACOB'S WELL.

"Let him that is athirst, come."—Rev. xxii. 17.

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The Verses in this little Book are for the most part Translated from the German.

CHAPTER I.

THE SCENE AND ITS ASSOCIATIONS.

"At Jacob's well, a stranger sought
His drooping frame to cheer;
Samaria's daughter little thought
That Jacob's God was there.

"This had she known, her fainting mind,
For richer draughts had sighed,
Nor had Messiah, ever kind,
Those richer draughts denied."

CHAPTER I.

THE SCENE AND ITS ASSOCIATIONS.

"Now Jacob's well was there."

LIKE the ferns and mosses on a ruined wall, are the cherished memories of the past, clinging to the relics of bygone days, and investing them with a new and living beauty. But associations that are linked with the deepest emotions of the heart, with the dearest of our present joys, and with the hopes that stretch far away into a never-ending future, have a yet richer grace and beauty; and as the Christian traveller visits those localities in the Holy Land, which are specially hallowed by these sacred associations, he feels that they possess a never-fading ver-

dure, that there is about them a fragrance that is more than earthly, like the fabulous Tooba tree of the Brahmin, "whose scent is the breath of eternity."

To the Bible student, the land of Canaan is rich in this never-fading verdure; and as in fact or imagination he pursues his way across its mountains and plains, or descends into the "valleys that run among the hills," many and varied are the scenes of deepest interest that arise up before his inward eye, while upon his inward ear fall the never-dying echoes of the shepherd's harp. It is "The Pleasant Land," the land of patriarchs and prophets, of the poet-king David, and of the wise and magnificent Solomon.

But more hallowed associations have their home there; for the feet of the Son of God have trodden those mountains and valleys; He has sailed upon the blue waters of Galilee, and walked along its quiet shore; in those cities and villages He went about doing good; there

did He labour, and fast, and pray, and weep; there did He restore the dead to life, and feed the hungry, and comfort the widow, and bless the little children; and there did He "accomplish his decease."

One of the loveliest spots in that "pleasant land" was the valley of Sichem, surrounded by lofty hills clad in luxuriant vegetation, or towering in rocky grandeur. Corn-fields and vineyards, olive gardens, yielding a rich crop to their owners and abundant gleanings for "the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow," plantations of sycamores, and orchards of citrons, figs, and pomegranates, interspersed with here and there a group of stately palms, gave richness and variety to the scene; and the mountain sides afforded luxuriant pasturage for the flocks and herds.

It was amid scenes such as these that the royal poet of Israel had sung, "Thou crownest the year with thy goodness; and thy paths drop fatness. They drop upon the pastures of the

wilderness: and the little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing."

No inconsiderable feature in the "pleasant land" were the wells, standing here and there, like friendly sentinels; and while the hot season might dry up the "brooks," there was still a hidden supply of water in the "fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills;" and in the earlier history of the country, when the patriarchs were strangers and pilgrims there, in seeking a new place of encampment, a supply of living water was the first thing to be cared for. It was customary also to provide reservoirs for rain water, in places where spring water could not be obtained. An abundant supply of living water, however, would render this labour unnecessary.

But men are more reasonable in temporal affairs than in matters of higher moment; for they will "forsake the fountain of living waters,

and hew them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."

The neighbourhood of Nâbulus, the ancient Sychar or Shechem, is not only rich in natural beauty, it is rich, too, in associations. When the patriarch Abraham first entered the land of promise, he had come to the "place of Sichem," and his grandson Jacob had dug the well, which in after years was to be hallowed as a resting-place of the wearied Saviour. It was to these fertile pastures that the sons of Jacob had led their flocks; here had the anxious father sent the stripling Joseph to inquire if it were "well with them;" and the "company of Ishmeelites" had probably passed this way, on their return into Egypt with their youthful captive.

It was here that the aged Joshua had gathered the tribes of Israel, and given them his parting exhortation, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve." And the people had replied, "The Lord our God will we serve, and His voice will we obey."

On either side of the town rose up the frowning Ebal, and the fertile Gerizim—types of the rich blessings and the fearful curses that had sounded from them. The ancient Shechem, too, had been a city of refuge; and the manslayer might have been seen fleeing, with the speed of despair, along the valley, or across the mountains, from the pursuit of the avenger of blood.

But a different scene is called up by the words, "And he drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle." The valley and adjacent plain, covered with the flocks and herds of the patriarch, with booths for the cattle, and tents for the use of his family and his numerous dependents; maids, and matrons, and little ones, in groups about the tents, or performing such domestic duties as that simple state of society called for.

It was the work of the women to fetch water for the household and for culinary purposes, and groups of Israelitish maidens would frequently gather at the well's mouth; and in after years,

when the patriarch was gathered to his fathers, their discourse would often be of him who "gave them the well," of his eventful life, his death in a foreign land, and his splendid funeral obsequies—attended by all of his descendants who were able for the journey, besides a large number of Egyptians, and chariots, and horsemen, "a very great company." And then they would speak about his dying words, and wonder if the "last days" were at hand, and when "Shiloh" would come, and where, and in what manner He would make His appearance. He was to be like Moses; and Moses was wise, and valiant, and good. Oh, that they might live to see Him! Was He already on the earth; and was the time for His manifestation to Israel not yet arrived? The high-minded would speak with enthusiasm of the glorious victories He should accomplish; how "He should subdue all His enemies, and break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces as a potter's vessel;" while those of meeker spirit would cherish in

their hearts a gentler image, and love to think of Him as the "Prince of Peace," who would "deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper." But there is probably not one in all those little companies, who would recognise Him in the lowly wayfarer, who sits there by the well side, a weary man; for this is He of whom the prophet had written, that he should "bear our infirmities, and be acquainted with grief."

The almost undoubted genuineness of the site of Jacob's well invests it with the deepest interest: for while the oblivious touch of time, and the desolations of war, have united with heathen desecration, and monkish tradition, to throw a veil of obscurity over the localities of the principal events in the Saviour's earthly history, this spot is doubly precious to the loving disciple, presenting, as it probably does, an aspect but little different from what it wore at the time when the Saviour rested by its side, and uttered words of heavenly love and wisdom,

instructing, not only the woman of Samaria, but the church throughout all ages, in the nature and attributes of the divine Father, and in His own relation to fallen man, as the Saviour, and fountain of eternal life.

"Give me to drink." How gratefully the words fall upon the ear, and sink into the heart! affording it another confirmation of the true humanity of the Saviour; adding another "verily" to the Apostle's assurance, that "He took not on him the nature of angels; but that He took on him the seed of Abraham."

"Thou, who didst sit on Jacob's well,
The weary hour of noon,
The languid pulses thou canst tell,
The nerveless spirit tune."

How would every disciple of Christ rejoice to find himself in the position of this daughter of Samaria; with what eager hand would he let down the pitcher, with what trembling devotion would he present it! How would the spot be ever after hallowed in his memory, and the re-

turn of the hour bring with it high and holy thoughts, and the vessel be a sacred and invaluable relic! How great a sacrifice would he not make to be allowed but once to minister to his Saviour thus! But the words, "I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink," will be addressed to many a one who never knew the Saviour as a "man of sorrows;" and loving disciples, of whose ministrations the world knows nothing, will in "that day" hear addressed to themselves the words, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

"Give me this water," said the woman; but she knew not what she asked, and expected only a temporal blessing. The disciples were more intelligent petitioners, when they cried, "Lord, evermore give us this bread;" but even they, more enlightened though they were, knew not the greatness of the gift they were supplicating; for the Saviour proceeds to instruct them, "I am the bread of life."

Oh how rich should we be, if with the whole soul we hungered for this bread of heaven, and thirsted for this living water!

An eastern myth represents Alexander, after having conquered the world, as setting out in quest of the fountain of life and immortality. But arriving at the gates of Paradise, he was repulsed. For "there are who seek to enter in, and shall not be able." It was no renowned warrior, no mighty conqueror, that was "set in the midst" when those words were uttered, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." No, it was "a little child." The little child may pass gently, safely, through the narrow gate, where the high and mighty, gorgeously apparelled, cannot follow; he must cast aside his proud trappings, and "humble himself as a little child."

In Christ Jesus there is "neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free;" but before the "middle wall" of partition was "broken down," and the Saviour had "abolished in His flesh the

enmity," there was no "unity of the faith," linking Jew and Gentile in a common bond of brotherhood; the fraternity of the Gospel was yet unknown. The Jew was the descendant of Abraham,—"the friend of God," and all other nations were looked upon by him as "common and unclean;" they might not enter into the holy place of the temple, but must remain in the outer court. But between the Jew and the Samaritan there existed peculiar sources of enmity. The Samaritans were descended from a people who had been brought by the king of Assyria from various parts of his dominions, and "placed in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel," intermingled with the remnant of Israelites who were left behind, when the bulk of the nation was carried into captivity. The colonists had brought with them various forms of idolatry; and their impiety having been punished by a direct manifestation of the wrath of God, a priest of the Jewish nation was commissioned to instruct them in

the worship of "the God of the land;" but they never relinquished their idolatry, and their religion had been a sort of mongrel worship—they had "feared the Lord, and served their own gods." Not being suffered to assist in the erection of the temple at Jerusalem, they had built for themselves a temple on Mount Gerizim, where a system of worship, resembling that of the Jews, was maintained, and rites performed by priests of their own nation. An implacable enmity had thus arisen between the nations, fostered most of all by the claims of the Samaritans for their temple, as being on the site appointed by God. This enmity was maintained with the greatest bitterness on the part of the Jew; for though a Samaritan might exercise offices of kindness towards an unfortunate Jew, yet for a Jew to ask a favour of a Samaritan was a circumstance so unusual, if not altogether without precedent, that the question might well arise, "How is it?"

These religious differences were probably a

frequent subject of discussion; and earnest inquirers after truth would often ponder the question, whether "in this mountain," or "at Jerusalem," "men ought to worship?" A doubt seems to have existed in the mind of the Samaritan woman; for immediately that she perceives more than ordinary wisdom in the stranger with whom she is conversing, she refers the question to him. "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."

Let us take all our doubts and difficulties at once to the Saviour, and they will assuredly be solved or removed, if not in the way we expect, or by a direct answer to our question, yet by a reply that will lead us to higher considerations, removing the pain of doubt and giving rest to the soul.

Christ did not at once make Himself known, but led the woman to perceive His omniscience in the acquaintance He evinced with her domestic

circumstances. As in His thirst and weariness His true humanity is plainly manifested, so in His unacquired knowledge His divinity shines forth. The same eye that had beheld Nathanael under the fig tree, had been present in the dwelling of the Samaritan woman; and the Saviour probably made other revelations to her than what are recorded in the narrative, for she said to her acquaintance in the city, "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?"

"*All things that ever I did.*" Let the thought be continually present with us. "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." He is the ever present one; ever present in the busy mart, in the festive scene, in the social circle, and in the sanctuary of the chamber.

"Jesus is here: beneath our eaves
Each sound His wakeful ear receives:
Hush, idle words, and thoughts of ill,
The Lord is listening: peace, be still."

"Salvation is of the Jews." The words might fall like a discord upon the ears of the listener, but she was no eager disputant, no caviller, but an earnest inquirer after truth; and prejudices, however deeply rooted, will speedily wither away, where a free entrance is given to the light of truth; like noxious weeds, they flourish best where the sunbeams cannot enter.

"Salvation is of the Jews." As we reflect upon the wondrous theme, visions of the past and of the future arise before us; while intimations of the divine mind and purposes present themselves in the words of inspiration, as, beginning with the appellation bestowed upon the patriarch, "the friend of God," we are carried along on the stream of history and prophecy, beholding "the chosen vine" brought out of Egypt and planted in the land of promise, the heathen being cast out before it; hearing the touching inquiry, "What more could have been done for my vineyard that I have not done in it?" and pondering those words of deep and

solemn import, "I would, and ye would not;" learning that the branches were broken off for unbelief, but that God is able to graft them in again; that the children are beloved for the father's sake; that the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the promises, all pertain to the chosen people; that if the falling away of them be the riches of the Gentiles, the receiving of them shall be life from the dead; that the Lord shall be sanctified in them in the sight of many nations; that He shall pour out His spirit upon them; that they shall look upon Him whom they have pierced, and mourn; that Jerusalem shall be a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And as God's dealings with His chosen people pass thus in review before us,

> "Faith's ear, with awful, still delight,
> Counts them like minute bells at night;"

and with quickened expectation looks forward to the perfect day, to the "new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

"Master, eat," said the disciples, who had returned with provisions from the city; but His soul was intent upon his work; "His meat and drink" was "to do the will of His Father;" He had been scattering seed which would immediately bring forth a plenteous harvest; He would "see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied."

Ever drawing lessons from the natural world and surrounding circumstances, He directs His disciples' minds to a consideration of the contrast between the natural and spiritual harvest. It was seed-time; and in the fields, the sower was committing to the earth the hopes of the coming year. The Saviour, too, had been scattering seed; but there needed no interval here between seed-time and harvest; the reaping was to follow close upon the sowing; the spiritual harvest was already at hand. "Lift up your eyes," said the Saviour, as a throng of Samaritans were seen approaching, "behold, the fields are white already to harvest."

"One soweth," said the Saviour, "and another reapeth." Not that the sower shall not reap, or that the reaper need not sow. The disciple may be commissioned to reap the fruit of other men's labours, but he will also scatter seed for a new harvest. He may go forth weeping, yet if he bear the precious seed, he shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him. But this joy may be in reserve for him until the great harvest home, when all the wheat shall be gathered into the garner, and the Lord of the harvest shall "wipe away all tears," and "both he that soweth and he that reapeth shall rejoice together."

CHAPTER II.

THE EXPECTED ONE.

" Hail to the day-spring; dawning from afar,
Bright in the east, I see His natal star:
Prisoners of hope! lift up your joyful eyes;
Welcome the King of Glory from the skies.
Who is the King of Glory?—Mark His birth:
In deep humility He stoops to earth,
Assumes a servant's form, a pilgrim's lot;
Comes to His own, His own receive him not;
Though angel choirs His peaceful advent greet,
And Gentile sages worship at His feet."

CHAPTER II.

THE EXPECTED ONE.

"I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when He is come, He will tell us all things."

"I KNOW that Messias cometh," said the Samaritan woman, as the truth dawned upon her mind, that He who sat before her was no ordinary man; as she wondered at the gracious words that fell from His lips, and felt that never man spake like this man. At an earlier stage of the interview she had perceived that He was a prophet, but there was more than prophecy in the words He had afterwards uttered.

The divine and wondrous truth—"God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth,"—found an echo in the

very depth of her soul; and the startling appeal, "Ye worship ye know not what," awoke the slumbering voice of conscience, which had oft-times faintly whispered the same truth.

Not the Jews alone were expecting the advent of the Messiah. Wherever they had been carried captive, they had taken Scripture or tradition along with them, and seeds of truth had been scattered far and wide; far and wide had been seen that zodiacal light in the spiritual horizon, which foretold the rising of the Sun of Righteousness, which was to be a "light to lighten the Gentiles," as well as "the glory of Israel."

The whole creation groaning under the burden of sin, longing for a deliverer, and aspiring towards an unknown God; the "thing formed" questioning with itself, "Why am I made thus?" but knowing not where to look for an answer; the soul with its immortal cravings, wandering amidst darkness and the shadows of death, grasped eagerly at these intimations, vague and imperfect as they might be, of One who was to

be "a light;" the weak and weary heard of One who was to be a "good shepherd," gathering the lambs in His arm, and carrying them in His bosom; the oppressed caught the rumour of a "strong deliverer," and the mourner, of One who should bind up the broken hearted. Well might the promised Saviour be the "desire of all nations."

As amid the darkness and chaos of the natural world, the voice of God was heard, saying, "Let there be light," so in the abyss of sin and misery into which the fall had plunged our first parents, was that voice again heard, saying, "Let there be light!" And instead of the long night of despair to which they might have been consigned, they beheld a faint glimmering, the earliest dawn of that celestial light, which was to shine more and more unto the perfect day, that day which Abraham, by faith, beheld and rejoiced in. And we who have beheld the glorious effulgence of that light, who have seen what prophets and kings desired to see, may look back to that

early morning dawn, and with joy and wonder trace its progress, as at first enveloped in mist and obscurity, it becomes clearer and clearer, and ray after ray penetrates the mist, until at length the Sun of Righteousness arises, and the aged Simeon exclaims, "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

The darker the abyss into which our first parents had fallen, the more intent and eager would be their gaze on that one beam of light that pierced the gloom; and who shall say that what to us seems but a feeble gleam was not a flood of light to them? Their souls, but recently in close and constant intercourse with their Creator, and not like ours, debased by a long course of wordliness and sin, and by contact with every form of evil, would give a readier entrance to the divine light, they would embrace it more eagerly, and comprehend it more fully; so that in the words—"I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her

seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel—" they might recognise far more of the plan of salvation than we should be able to do, were not light reflected upon them from so many other portions of Scripture.

"The Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil;" and in this first intimation of a Redeemer, a blow was struck that shook the powers of darkness. Satan's design was not merely to destroy the peace and happiness of mankind, he sought to frustrate the plans, and to tarnish the glory of the Almighty. But in that day when the purposes of the Eternal shall be unravelled before the eyes of a wondering universe; when the enigma of the existence of evil shall be at least so far solved as to remove every shadow of doubt as to the omnipotence, and wisdom, and goodness of the Creator, will it not be seen, that, instead of wresting a jewel from the Almighty's crown, Satan has been the sorry labourer, who, with infinite pains, has dug out of the mine the brightest

jewel that adorns the diadem of the King of kings?

"In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." But Christ brought life and immortality to light. A day of death—an immortality of life! "Deliver from going down into the pit, I have found a ransom." Ye shall not die; was the utterance of infinite love and mercy. "Ye shall not surely die," said the tempter, as he unwittingly echoed the decree of heaven. The same words were on the lips of infinite malice, and infinite love; but how different their import!

In the sin of our first parents, the adversary thought to raise a barrier between the creature and the Creator, and knew not that he was but raising a stepping-stone, by which man should be brought nearer to his Maker. The ladder by which he thought to scale heaven's walls, and violate the treasury of the eternal God, was that by which man, by painful steps indeed, but surely, may climb heaven's heights, and attain

a degree of felicity unknown to the innocent dwellers in paradise.

"Ye shall be as gods," said the tempter, "knowing good and evil;" but how little did he think that in this knowledge of evil, by which he hoped irremediably to poison the springs of their spiritual life, he was but supplying them with a lens, through which they would discern, magnified a thousandfold, the infinite perfections of the divine character! It is a fearful thing to discover, in the secret corners of the heart, thoughts of pride and revenge, and impure motives of action; but it is a glorious thing to learn something of the purity and holiness of God; and, knowing the evil, to perceive the infinite superiority of the good; and, knowing the good, to loathe and detest the evil.

No sooner was the penalty of transgression incurred, than the decree of redemption went forth. The salvation was not delayed, or evil would have been triumphant; the heavenly whisper, that "mercy and truth have met toge-

ther, righteousness and peace have embraced each other," was more potent than the voice of despair, and on the smitten heart fell gratefully the first notes of the heavenly anthem, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

But "as sin abounded, grace did much more abound;" and as further removed from that intimate communion with God which was the glory of Paradise, and as the mists and vapours of sin and ignorance continued to increase, so there needed a clearer light, a more explicit testimony; and in the promise given to Abraham, we see how the day of the Lord continued to break, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;" and in the words of the dying Jacob, He is yet more plainly revealed, as the "Shiloh," unto whom should the gathering of the people be.

But where was this "Prince of Peace" to be looked for? in what nation should He arise? "I will raise them up a Prophet," said the Lord

to Moses, "from among their brethren;" and Micah indicates the exact locality of His birth. "But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting," Mic. v. 2.

But how was His divine mission to be recognised? what credentials should He bear? He shall be "like unto thee, and I will put my words in His mouth; and He shall speak unto them all that I shall command Him," Deut. xviii. 18, 19. That these credentials were acknowledged, we have the testimony of His intercessory prayer. "For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me," Jno. xvii. 8. The woman of Samaria, too, expected to recognise in the Messiah a divine teacher. "When he is come, he will tell us all things."

Nor were they left in utter ignorance as to the time of His appearing. "I shall see Him, but not now; I shall behold Him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel," Numb. xxiv. 17. And the sceptre was not to depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh came.

But the light increases, and ray after ray breaks forth, as we read in the prophecies of Isaiah the details of His personal history and character. "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel," Isa. vii. 14. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace," Isa. ix. 6. "And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord,"

Isa. xi. 2. "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench: He shall bring forth judgment unto truth," Isa. xlii. 2, 3. "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare His generation? for He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was He stricken. And He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth," Isa. liii. 3, 7—9.

A wondrous outline of the Saviour's course on earth, from birth to death! And the Psalmist had been divinely taught, that He should be be-

trayed by one of His familiar friends; that His enemies should part His garments among them, and cast lots for His vesture; that His hands and feet should be pierced; that His soul should not remain in Hades, nor His flesh see corruption; but that He should ascend into heaven, and receive gifts for men.

And to Daniel in a vision was revealed the glorious consummation. "I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like the pure wool: His throne was like the fiery flame, and His wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened. I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve

him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed," Dan. vii. 9, 10, 13, 14.

But detailed and significant as the prophecies of the advent and earthly life of the Messiah appear to us, who have beheld their accomplishment, it was then only to the eye of faith that their meaning was rendered visible. The carnal minded Jew might repeat with exultation the Messianic psalm, but it was only for those who, like Simeon and Anna, were devoutly waiting for the consolation of Israel, to recognise, in the lowly babe of Bethlehem, the Almighty Saviour. Blindness, in part, had happened unto Israel, and the eyes of the Gentiles had been opened to behold the brightness of the rising of the Sun of Righteousness.

Wherefore throng those companies of eastern travellers towards Jerusalem, with earnest thoughts and precious gifts? "We have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship

him." But not in Jerusalem will he be found, though "all Jerusalem" will be "troubled" at the inquiry. It is "thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah," that art honoured as the birthplace of him "whose goings forth have been from of old."

Open thy portals, life, behold!
A king in thee his course would hold;
Ah! who shall tell his worth?
A king, before whose glorious light
And gorgeous splendour, shrink from sight
The meaner kings of earth.
Oh see,
How he,
In royal state,
Now through the gate
Descends, and how
The heavenly choir before him bow!

As ready there he stands, all round,
The heights of heaven with songs resound,
And palms bestrew his way;
But ah, how strange! as near the earth
Approaching, all this sacred mirth
Grows dim, and fades away;

And palms,
And psalms,
And crowns of gold,
And thrones, behold,
All, all are gone,
A little child is found alone!

No splendour here adorns his brow,
Of glorious state we hear not now,
Poor straw his bed supplies;
O happy he who findeth grace,
Beside this infant's resting-place,
To ponder and be wise!
Oh see,
How he,
Within us, mild,
And like a child,
His work begins,
And heirs for heaven thus daily wins!

The little city of Bethlehem reposes quietly on the hill top, and the shepherds on the neighbouring mountains are tending their flocks, and the clear waters of the Dead Sea, seen in the distance, roll calmly amidst the relics of guilt and misery that lay around them; and nature

wears very much the same aspect as in the days when the aged Jesse resided within those walls, and the stripling David awoke the echoes of the hills with his harp melodies, and sang, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." Not now, however, as then they were, are the hosts of the Philistines encamped on the hills and plains of Judah, but other hosts are there, multitudes of invisible beings are thronging that quiet spot; for in an obscure outbuilding of a caravanserai in the little town, an event has taken place, which has been the wondering theme of angels and archangels, while its deep significance is veiled from mortal eye, like the angel forms that minister there.

Sin has drawn a veil between the spiritual and the material world, and not many times in the world's history has it been lifted; and as God most frequently chooses the lowly ones of the earth to be the recipients of his peculiar favours, so on this night, it was to a company of shepherds that the intangible veil was raised,

and a multitude of the heavenly host accompanied the announcement of the Saviour's birth, with a jubilate, that was to be echoed and re-echoed by the church throughout all ages, till it should be merged in the harmony of the "new song:"—

> "Like circles widening round
> Upon a clear blue river,
> Orb after orb the wondrous sound
> Is echoed on for ever:"—

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

"I know that Messias cometh," said the woman of Samaria. "I know that Messias cometh," has echoed through the church from age to age. No sooner had the first anticipation been fulfilled, than the key-note of a new song of expectation was given by the "two men in white apparel." "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." "Shall so come"—"in like

manner"—"as ye have seen him go;" a triad in which the heart of the disciple delights, and yet more in the glorious burden of the anthem, "This same Jesus"—"shall come again."

Does not the expectation of again beholding the face of a dear, long absent friend, excite some of the best feelings of our nature? Does not the engrossing thought,—he is coming, he will soon be here,—forbid the entrance of trivial vexations? Does not the heart expand under the influence of these genial feelings? Are not narrow, selfish thoughts for the time subdued; and do not kind thoughts, generous feelings, warm affections, spring up quickly in this glad sunshine? Let us hope there are few hearts but know something of these feelings; and what should the heart of the Christian experience, who is anticipating the return of his Saviour? Does it not seem that every evil thought should at once, and for ever, flee away? "Faith which worketh by love, and purifieth the heart," says the apostle. If our faith were not less

than a grain of mustard seed, would it not be so?

One, only one shall be the fold,
And One the faithful guardian there;
Soon shall the earth that day behold,
When the good Shepherd shall appear:
Rejoice, O timid, wandering sheep,
Jesus His word will surely keep.

Already the dim mountain height
Reflects a feeble, glimmering ray,
Foretelling, in that peaceful light,
The coming of a glorious day:
Benighted pilgrims, pray for light,
And Jesus will disperse the night.

See, the dark threatening mist cloud steal
Away before the day-spring, where
The desert thirsty children kneel,
And drink in life and healing there:
The morning light increases, till
Jesus His promise shall fulfil.

The Angel of the covenant near
Approaches,—from the open tomb
A sound, a stir of life we hear;
Dear Saviour, let thy kingdom come!
The Saviour calls, the light appears,
Away, our unbelieving fears!

O glorious day of truth and light,
With Christ a never setting sun,
And perfect peace, and deep delight,
The Saviour and His people one:
We sow in tears, in joy to reap,
For Jesus will His promise keep.

CHAPTER III.

LIVING WATER.

In green pastures near thy side,
Let my willing feet abide!
Let my thirsting spirit know
Where the living waters flow!

Kyrie, eleison.

CHAPTER III.

LIVING WATER.

"The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

THE symbolic language of Scripture, which is one of its marked characteristics, is beautifully adapted to every order of mind, to every stage of intellectual culture, and to every age and condition of life. The refined mind may intuitively perceive its beauty and elegance, but it needs not the astuteness or power of abstraction of the philosopher, to enter into its meaning; it is sufficiently intelligible to the feeble comprehension; and though new stores of truth and beauty will repay a diligent investigation, yet so clear and palpable is the outline of instruction

to be conveyed, that even he who runs may read, and through this medium the blessed truths of revelation may enter the mind, and touch the heart of a little child, and the Saviour be endeared to him as the kind shepherd, who "takes the lambs in his arm, and carries them in his bosom;" while, to the aged pilgrim, he is "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

We behold, and rejoice in the varied forms and beauties of creation; but it is to the careful student of nature that her intrinsic worth and loveliness is revealed. To one who has learned with a loving heart to read her pages, "There's not a plant, a leaf, a blossom, but unfolds a folio volume;" and thus too is it, not only with the symbolic language of Scripture, but with every form of Scripture truth.

The Bible is a rich and inexhaustible treasury, in which are laid up vast and varied stores of wealth. Its sublime truths, its graphic descriptions, its touching histories, its impassioned poetry, place it far above any human compo-

sition; and the poet, the philosopher, and the historian, must all unite to render it the homage of their understanding. But the devout and humble Christian sees in it something far more than historic accuracy, pure morality, and unrivalled strains of poetry: to him it is the heavenly manna that sustains the soul, as well as gratifies the taste; and with the Psalmist he will esteem it "more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." It is the armoury whence he is supplied with weapons for the battle of life; it is the light in the dark valley, the helm in the tempest-tossed bark, the title deed of his inheritance, the staff that supports him in his pilgrimage, and the fountain by the way side, where he is refreshed and invigorated for his onward journey; and he listens to its teachings with docility and reverence, having learned that it is indeed the voice of God: and in the attitude of the child prophet he exclaims, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." He

searches in it diligently, as for hidden treasures, and he finds stores of wisdom and knowledge which no other source would supply to him.

He learns there the history of creation, and the origin of the human race; he learns that by the agency of a fallen spirit man lost his innocence and happiness; that suffering is the handmaid of sin, ever attending her steps; and that "*all* have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." But a light from heaven rests upon the sacred page, as he reads of a "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world;" and he beholds the types and figures of the Mosaic economy pointing to this one great truth,—"*The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin;*" and viewing at once his lost condition, and the infinite love that rescued him from it, he exclaims, "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from de-

struction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies." And as he contemplates the mind of God, as displayed in this glorious scheme of salvation,—so simple and sublime in its details and results,—he is lost in wonder and adoration. That the injured sovereign should identify Himself with His rebellious subjects, and bear the penalty of their transgressions; that thus the eternal and immutable divine law should be honoured and avenged in the sight of the universe; and that to the rebels should be offered a free and full forgiveness, and not only a restoration to their former state of happy innocence, but to a condition far higher than that which they had lost;—all this is so far above human conception, and bears such unmistakeable marks of its divine origin, that with reverence and meekness he receives the engrafted word, which is able to save his soul.

"Oh, how unlike the complex works of man,
Heaven's easy, artless, unencumbered plan!

No meretricious graces to beguile,
No clustering ornaments to clog the pile;
From ostentation as from weakness free,
It stands like the cerulean arch we see,
Majestic in its own simplicity.
Inscribed above the portal, from afar
Conspicuous as the brightness of a star,
Legible only by the light they give,
Stand the soul-quickening words, *Believe and live.*"

He has glimpses, too, into the spirit world; and he sees pure angelic natures ministering to the necessities of fallen man; rejoicing in his creation, and still more in his salvation, and with holy curiosity desiring to understand the mystery of his redemption.

And he is not left in utter darkness with regard to the eternal world; for the Saviour has come from thence, and has again entered the Holy place, and the light of Heaven has streamed from beneath the lifted veil; and though he sees but in dim perspective, shadowy glimpses of its perfect peace, and active enjoyment, its fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore, its many

mansions, and its exceeding and eternal weight of glory; though few and faint are the notes of holy rapture that reach his ear, and the most vivid conceptions of his heart fall far below the glorious reality; though details he would delight to contemplate are withheld from him, yet of one thing he is clearly and unmistakeably assured, and this would of itself constitute his heaven, and assure him of perfect bliss, be the other circumstances what they might; he is to be "*for ever with the Lord;* and in the house of his pilgrimage he will sing,—

"For ever with the Lord;"
Amen. So let it be:
Life from the dead is in that word;
'Tis immortality.
Here in the body pent,
Absent from Him I roam:
Yet nightly pitch my moving tent
A day's march nearer home."

But the consummation is not yet; he is still in the house of his pilgrimage, still in the dark valley, still exposed to the fierce and potent

weapons of the prince of the power of the air, to the seduction of the world, the flesh, and the devil; still are there fightings without and fears within; still does a host of evils, disguised or undisguised, riot within his heart; still is there perpetual warfare between the good that he would, and the evil that he would not; but angels are watching the strife, commissioned, it may be, to supply him with weapons for the conflict, or to remove the venom from the darts of the foe; and the Captain of his salvation is ever at hand, who will not only sustain him in the warfare, but make him *more than conqueror*.

World, farewell, my soul is weary;
I would here no longer stay,
In thy desert wild and dreary;
Heavenwards will I wend my way.
World, in thee is war and strife,
Pride and vanity are rife;
But in heaven there ever is
Peace, and rest, and perfect bliss.

On that blessed shore arriving,
Pain and sadness at an end,

Done all anxious care and striving,
Resting with my dearest Friend.
In the world is need and woe,
And at last death's bitter throe;
But in heaven above shall be
Peace, and joy, and purity.

What are earthly joy and pleasure?
Cloud, and mist and empty wind:
What are worldly wealth and treasure?
Burdens for the weary mind:
World, in thee is war and strife,
Pride and vanity are rife;
But in heaven is perfect peace,
Rest, and all enduring bliss.

Oh, what glorious songs are pealing
From that chosen spotless throng,
O'er the plains of heaven stealing:
"Holy, holy," still their song.
World, in thee are scoffs and jeers,
Hatred, woe, and bitter tears;
While in heaven there ever is
Peace, and rest, and perfect bliss.

Here is weeping and repining;
Earthly joy not long endures;
If awhile the sun is shining,
Soon dark night his beams obscures.

World, deep anguish is in thee,
And the final agony;
But in heaven above there is
Peace, and rest, and perfect bliss.

There my Lord unveils His glory;
I shall see Him face to face,
And repeat the wondrous story
Of a sinner saved by grace.
When the woes of earth are past,
And death's bitter pang at last,
Then, in heaven above will be
Peace, and joy, and purity.

Oh, to join the thrilling voices
Of that happy, sainted choir!
Each in Jesus Christ rejoices,
All their thoughts to Him aspire.
In the world is war and strife,
Pride and vanity are rife;
But in heaven will ever be
Peace, and rest, and purity.

Cheer, my soul, the time is nearing,
Thou thy Saviour's face shalt see;
Lovest thou thy Lord's appearing?
Joyful shall that moment be.
World, thou hast but storm and strife,
Fear and sadness, death in life;

While in heaven there ever is
Peace, and rest, and perfect bliss.

Now in love without dissembling,
Saviour, school my willing heart,
That when worlds are round me trembling,
"Come," I hear, and not, "Depart."
World, in thee is fear and care,
Sin and sadness everywhere;
But in heaven there ever is
Peace, and rest, and perfect bliss.

But the Bible speaks not only of a pilgrimage and a conflict, with exceeding great and precious promises of assistance and deliverance, but it speaks of a life given and sustained; not the life which is compared to the frail existence of the flowers of the field; not the life which is held on the frail tenure of the breath in the nostrils, which is swifter than a post, or a weaver's shuttle, whose days are "few and evil," all "labour and sorrow," and "soon cut off," and whose light is quenched in the grave, but of a life that is pure as the light of heaven, and more lasting than the hills; which shall be as fresh and exuberant when

the earth shall have been removed out of its place, and the heavens shall have departed as a scroll that is rolled together, as in the first moment that it came from the hand of the Giver; for it is eternal life, and the Giver is the Infinite One.

Life! who shall understand the deep mystery? "Now we know but in part."

"The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life." Bread and water, which in Scripture are made to represent all the necessary sustenance of the body, are used as symbols of all that is necessary for spiritual life. The body, without sustenance, must inevitably perish; neither can the life of the soul be maintained without spiritual nourishment; and though there may be an appearance of life and action, it has no depth or truth, but is factitious as the movements of a galvanized corpse, and delusive as the mirage in the desert.

It is in this condition of the soul that the

heavenly manna and the water of life are offered to us; that, tasting of these, we may awake to newness of life; and having once tasted, we shall assuredly come again to this storehouse, and to this fountain.

Treasure beyond all treasure,
Jesus, thou jewel mine,
My richest, dearest pleasure,
Here in my heart's deep shrine,
A throne I have prepared me,
For thee, my Saviour dear,
Because thy griefs have spared me
From all my grief and fear.

Thou very Bread of heaven,
On which my spirit feeds,
Sweet Manna, that art given
To meet my utmost needs;
Thou joy of all my gladness,
Dispeller of my grief;
In weariness and sadness
My comfort and relief;

O let thy presence brighten
The languor of my night;
My darkness to enlighten,
O come, my spirit's light!

Thy face, dear Saviour, hiding,
My soul in sadness lies;
But near thee still abiding,
This, this is Paradise.

Fount of Eternal Being,
O Jesus, sweet repose,
Thy sympathy, all seeing,
Hallows my keenest woes;
Smite as thou wilt, yet never
This pain my heart shall move,
Nor life, nor death, shall sever
My spirit from thy love.

To thee, my Saviour, living,
Thine is my fleeting breath,
To thee my spirit giving,
Thine, thine in life and death;
Near me in grief and sadness,
If thou, dear Saviour, dwell,
The darkest day were gladness,—
Without thee, heaven were hell.

Vain earth, I will not love thee,
Thy charms shall nought avail;
My spirit soars above thee;
Yea, and within the veil,
For all His people caring,
My Jesus there I see,

A blessed home preparing;
Ah! there 'tis good to be.

Dear Saviour, come to cheer me,
And bring me where thou art,
To dwell for ever near thee,
Reposing on thy heart;
Thy grace, dear Lord, prevailing,
No ill shall there annoy,
No pain or grief assailing,
All pure and perfect joy.

As one who has been all his life in a dungeon knows nothing of the pure air and sunshine, but having one glance, one breath of these free gifts of heaven, would shrink with horror from returning to the dark abode he has left, for then is he for the first time aware of its fearful gloom, and its oppressive and poisonous atmosphere, so is it with one who tastes for the first time of the heavenly manna, and of the water of life. Not till then is he aware that his spirit has been sepulchred within him, in utter ignorance of the blessed light of day.

And we may carry the simile a little further;

for the released captive knows almost nothing at that first glance of the riches of earth, and air, and sea, and sky; of mountain, and woodland, and stream; of primeval forests, and everlasting hills; of stupendous cataracts, and silvery mountain torrents; of all the forms of vegetation, from the cedar that is on Lebanon to the hyssop that groweth on the wall; and of every condition of animal life; he knows nothing of the revolving seasons, with their separate beauties merging one into the other, like the tints of dissolving views; or of the alternations of day and night, with the ever new delights of dawn and sunset, and northern light, and milky way, and myriad stars, and moon walking in brightness; or of the forked lightning, like the shafts of the Almighty, quick and powerful, and shooting from one corner of the heavens to the other; or of the dull glare and smoke of the volcano, like an emanation from the abyss of darkness, fierce but restrained; or of the fossil tell-tales of the world's infancy; or of the clouds that take the imagination cap-

tive, as they sail through the blue concave; or of the hoar-frost; or of the snow that clothes the desolate earth with its brightness and purity; "the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." Of all these forms of beauty and wonder —and these are not a tithe of the long catalogue —he knows almost nothing in that first glance, although he feels himself so rich; as if he already possessed vast stores of knowledge and countless images of beauty. And the Christian knows far, far less of the infinite stores of this life which he has tasted. The released captive may bend all his energies to the study of the life around him, yet he will never know a millionth part of its resources; but the Christian has received the assurance that what he knows not now, he shall know hereafter; and the vast pile of science, which it has taken ages to accumulate, will be less than a crumb in that eternal feast to which he is looking forward; and though the knowledge, which it will be one part of his bliss to acquire, will doubtless include a perfect acquaint-

ance with all the laws and system of nature, for the fragments shall all be gathered up, and nothing lost that serves to reveal the wisdom, and skill, and goodness of the Almighty Father; yet there are deeper riches, more ineffable fountains of bliss in store for him, in a close and constant intercourse with the Father of lights, and in an ever-growing acquaintance with the perfections of his nature.

Upwards, upwards to thy gladness,
Upwards to thy heavenly goal,
Bid farewell to all thy sadness,
Flee to Jesus, O my soul!
He is thy life;
He will give thee rest at last,
Shield thee here from time's rough blast,
And this world's strife.

Onward, onward, ever nearer
To thy Jesus and thy home;
Quick ascending, ever clearer
Shall the heavenly light become.
God is thy tower;
Though beset with foes around,
Jesus will thy foes confound
With His great power.

Firmly, firmly, now confiding
On thy Saviour kind and true,
God thy footsteps ever guiding,
And His mercies ever new;
He will appear,
Helper in each time of need,
Strong Protector, Friend indeed,
Then never fear.

Enter, enter to the holiest;
Jesus has the way made plain,
There in attitude the lowliest,
Tell thy care, and grief, and pain.
God is thy Friend;
Though the world despise and blame,
Jesus' love remains the same,
Time without end.

Higher, higher, O my spirit;
Soar above the things of earth,
Think of thy Redeemer's merit,
Yield Him all that thou art worth.
He left His throne
To seek thee, ruined, wretched, lost;
Thy ransom did His life blood cost;
Thou art His own.

Upwards, upwards, look above thee,
Follow Christ within the veil;

Let not earthly trifles move thee,
Let not earthly thoughts prevail.
Time soon shall cease,
And earth decay; then heavenward press,
And Jesus shall for ever bless,
With rest and peace.

The fountain shall spring up eternally, for its source is infinite.

The use of this symbol in scripture is perhaps nowhere more striking than on that occasion when a vast concourse of people were gathered together to solemnise one of the three great religious festivals of the Jews, the feast of tabernacles. It was on the last day, "that great day of the feast," when, in addition to the previous joyful solemnities, was added that of fetching water in a golden bowl from the fountain of Siloam, and its pouring out by the priests at the foot of the altar of burnt offerings; the people meanwhile singing the words of the prophet Isaiah, "Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation," that Jesus stood and cried, "If any man thirst, let him come

unto me and drink." Who can say with what compassion He had beheld the vast multitudes of worshippers, as they thronged the temple courts, and heard them, as with one voice, pronouncing their own condemnation in the words of the Psalmist, "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner;" for it was their custom on this day to sing the hundred and eighteenth psalm; and while they chanted, "Blessed be He that cometh in the name of the Lord," and knew not that He whose advent they were so eagerly anticipating, even then stood in their midst?

The woman of Samaria was expecting a coming Messiah, but she knew not the gift of God until he revealed himself to her: "I that speak unto thee am He." No, we can never recognise the Saviour till He makes Himself known to us. "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee," said the Lord to Peter; and not only is the natural mind so blinded that it cannot discern the Saviour, but the disciple too fails to recog-

nise Him in the storm-tossed bark, and in the quiet walk to Emmaus; and like Hagar in the wilderness, we know not the fountain that is close at hand, till our eyes are opened to perceive it.

When anything in the shape of temporal good is set before us, how eagerly do we put forth the hand, and say, "Give me," while spiritual treasures are passed by unheeded, until we have learned to say, "I thirst, but not as once I did;" and with David: "As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God;" for nothing short of God can satisfy the longing of the immortal soul.

What is the eager pursuit after knowledge, and power, and wealth, and pleasure, and what the repining dissatisfaction that is experienced in the possession of them, but the perpetual thirst and fever of the distempered soul, leading it to cry out, again and again, "Give me to drink," and with ever-renewed thirst requiring deeper draughts?

There are two conditions of the soul spoken of in the Bible—life, and death. The soul is either dead in trespasses and sins, or it is alive unto God; there are two classes of human beings,—the righteous, and the wicked; two roads on which men are walking,—the broad road, which is thronged with eager travellers, and the narrow road, with here and there its little company of wayfarers. But there is no third class spoken of, no neutral condition, no intermediate road, and no other consummation than eternal life, or eternal death. And let each one reflect, that to one or other of these classes he must belong, that one or other of these destinies must be his final condition, and that these results may hang upon the present moment, for not another is assured to him.

And how clearly defined are these distinctions in His eye, before whom all things are naked and open, who "seeth not as man seeth;" for "man looketh on the outward appearance," but the Lord looketh on the heart.

Let us seek to answer aright those two questions of infinite importance proposed by the Saviour, and on our answer to which depends our eternal welfare. "What think ye of Christ?" and, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" A question for the intellect, and one for the heart.

Right views are closely connected with right feelings; and though the former may be possessed without the latter, they are more usually the result than the precursor. "If any man will *do his will*, he shall *know of the doctrine*." A right state of heart towards God, and sincere desire for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, will ever be accompanied with divine teaching. "The meek will he guide in judgment, the meek will he teach his way." The panting soul will surely be supplied with living water, and not only with occasional draughts, but—"the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life."

My Shepherd is the Saviour dear,
I shall not want while He is near;
Me, a poor wandering sheep, He leads
To fertile vales and pleasant meads;
Where living waters gently glide,
He makes my weary soul abide.

When from the rightful path I stray,
He leads me back to Wisdom's way;
His care sustains my fleeting breath,
His love supports my soul in death;
Yea, in that valley, I will fear
No evil, for my Lord is there.

My cup with blessings overflows;
He makes me triumph o'er my foes;
For me a board is richly spread;
With oil of joy He crowns my head.
Goodness and mercy all my days
Shall tune my heart to constant praise;
Then in thy house I would appear,
To dwell for ever with thee there.

CHAPTER IV.

SPIRITUAL WORSHIP.

" There are in this loud stunning tide
  Of human care and crime,
With whom the melodies abide,
  Of th' everlasting chime ;
Who carry music in their heart,
Through dusky lane and wrangling mart,
Plying their daily task with busier feet,
Because their secret souls a holy strain repeat."

CHAPTER IV.

SPIRITUAL WORSHIP.

"God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

THE gods of the nations were many, and were worshipped under every green tree; Jehovah was one; the only living and true God. And this truth was emphatically set forth in the appointment of one place where He would be sought after.

But the time was come when incense and a pure offering should be offered in every place (Mal. i. 11), when men should "pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath or doubting," 1 Tim. ii. 8. The time was come when the veil was to be rent asunder, and the types

and shadows were to be done away in Christ. The temple was no longer to be the special abode of Deity, but the renewed heart was to be a temple for the living God. Its stones were to be cast down, and it was to be utterly destroyed, but the foundations of another temple were laid; a spiritual temple, of which Jesus Christ himself was the foundation and Chief Corner stone; and other foundation was no man to lay; and on this were His people to be built up "for a habitation of God through the Spirit."

The Lord is here; then let us bow before Him,
With hearts devout adore Him;
The Lord is in our midst; then meekly kneeling,
Silent with hallowed feeling,
All ye who prove
That God is love,
Come, with lowly mind,
Come, with wills resigned.

The Lord is here; to angels it is given
To worship Him in heaven;
Yea, day and night their joyful service bringing,
And 'Holy, holy,' singing;

Then wilt thou, here,
Lord, lend thine ear,
That to thee may rise
Our poor sacrifice?

All vanity and earthly lust resigning,
Our souls to thee consigning,
Life, spirit, will, before thy footstool laying,
To thee our homage paying;
Yea, thou alone
Shalt fill the throne,
Thou, our sovereign Lord,
Honoured and adored.

To praise thee rightly, Lord, my soul aspireth;
To honour thee desireth;
O, might I like the angels serve thee ever,
Thy presence leaving never;
Dear Lord, let me
All earnestly,
Strive to please thee still,
Seek to do thy will.

Spirit that filleth all, all knowing, seeing,
In whom we have our being,
Thou shoreless, boundless ocean, wondrous wonder,
Myself thy deep waves under,
Life, siprit, will,
Subservient still,

Let me only be,
Quite absorbed in thee.

Thou all pervading Spirit, thy clear shining
Strongly my heart inclining,
Like to the tender flowrets passive standing,
And to the sun expanding,
Ev'n so let me,
All quietly
With joy thy beams embrace,
Leave all to thy rich grace.

O, make me simple, earnest, meek, and lowly,
With heart serene and holy;
O give me purity of heart and being,
That thee, the pure one, seeing,
Higher, higher,
I might aspire,
As an eagle, move,
In thy light above.

O come, dear Lord, thy wondrous grace excelling,
And make my heart thy dwelling;
All glorious in me, dear Lord, appearing,
Thee honouring and fearing,
By sea and land,
On every hand,
Let thy light appear,
Let me feel thee near.

External worship, outward rites, special times, a fixed place, and hereditary priesthood, were now to give place to a more spiritual worship, limited to no place or time. There needed no more the high priest to enter once a year into the most holy place, "not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people;" for the great High Priest, the "holy, harmless, undefiled," was about to enter into the holiest of all "with his own blood." No longer was the manifestation of the Divine Presence to be veiled from every eye but that of the high priest; for He, in whom dwelt "the fulness of the Godhead bodily," had stood in the outer court. There needed no more the linen robe and costly ephod, for a more pure and spotless, a more costly and beautiful garment was wrought out. There needed no more the memorial stones on the shoulders, nor the breastplate with the names inscribed upon it; for the Great High Priest would carry them inscribed upon His heart of love.

All the ceremonies of the Jewish worship were symbolical, and deeply significant, and the one great truth, that "without shedding of blood is no remission," was strikingly pre-eminent. But while beholding the outward rite, and luxuriating in the pomp of worship, how many failed to discern the deep meaning that lay hidden beneath that veil; for the corrupt heart learns not readily the lessons of heaven.

It is a deep necessity of the human soul that it have somewhat to worship. Man will either worship and bow down and kneel before the Lord his Maker, or he will commit the incredible folly of worshipping the works of his own hands; either he will worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness, or he will be given up to abominable idolatry; either he will pay his vows in the house of the Lord, or he will bow down in the house of Rimmon; either he will be an intelligent and happy worshipper, worshipping God in the spirit and rejoicing in Christ Jesus, or he will ignorantly worship an unknown god.

The heart of sinless man would turn to God as naturally and truly as the needle to the pole; but the vast iron mountain of sin deflects the needle, so that it no longer points truly. The soul, created in the image of God, no longer reflects that image, but is like a broken mirror; and the shattered fragments yield but a distorted image, in which the divine lineaments are no longer to be recognised.

But though the visible presence has departed from the desecrated temple of the heart, though we fall short of the glory of God, yet are there unmistakeable indications of a divine origin; that "we are His offspring," is a conviction from which we cannot escape; the atheist *seeks* to do it, but does he accomplish his desire? Surely not while reason holds her sway. "The fool"—only *the fool*—"hath said in his heart, No God." Yea, there *is* a God, and one to whom "vengeance belongeth;" and this shall the atheist know; but for the contrite sinner there is another truth in store: "He delighteth in mercy." Yes,

vengeance *belongeth* unto God, but it is in mercy that He *delighteth;* the one an essential, the other a darling attribute.

Come then, all, embrace His love,
Come ye weary in the strife,
Jesus calls you from above,
Makes you heirs of endless life;
O believe and comprehend,
That He is the sinner's Friend.

Merit have we none to show,
But in His all faithful word,
Peace and pardon freely flow,
Oath and promise from the Lord:
Wide His arms of love extend;
Jesus is the sinner's Friend.

Lord, I answer to thy call,
Sad and sinful, weak and blind,
Lowly at thy feet I fall,
Let me now forgiveness find;
Yea, thou wilt a pardon send,
For thou art the sinner's Friend.

Though my sins be crimson red,
Thou canst make them white as snow;
Yea, for this thy blood was shed;
Healing streams from thee that flow

On our wounded hearts descend,
For thou art the sinner's Friend.

Now no more my burdened heart,
Or the broken law reproves,
Since the Saviour takes my part,
Free I am, for Jesus loves;
Doubts no more my soul shall rend,
Now that Jesus is my Friend.

Jesus is the sinner's Friend,
Yea, He loveth even me,
And I shall to heaven ascend,
There His face for ever see;
This my hope when life shall end,
Jesus is the sinner's Friend.

That He, who might command and compel our obedience, should yet invite, persuade, allure, and wait, is surely an unmistakeable indication that He desires our hearts' best love; that a willing obedience only will be acceptable to Him. "*Choose* ye this day whom ye will serve;"—"Why will ye die?—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;"—"O taste and see that the Lord is good"—are words addressed to free and reasonable

creatures. "O taste and see,"—make a short trial,—enter His service for a day, an hour,—prove Him,—let your own experience decide the matter,—*taste*, only *taste*. But as surely as the trial is made, as surely as one drop of that divine love enters the soul, so surely will it cry out: "Thy words are sweet to my taste,"—"Thy love is better than wine."

"Thou canst not behold my face and live," said the Lord to Moses; but in the face of the Lord Jesus we may behold His glory, "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." We turn away our eyes from the dazzling effulgence of the undivided sunbeam, but in the parted hues of the rainbow, we behold its hidden beauties revealed, and shining with a milder lustre, on which we fear not to gaze.

"Looking unto Jesus;" this is the attitude of the true spiritual worshipper. And this looking is not a fitful regard, a passing glance, but a stedfast, earnest gaze; a gaze so intent, that

by it we drink in the very life and spirit, and thus grow into the likeness of what we contemplate; until at length we shall be "like Him," when we shall "see Him as He is."

Thou blessed Saviour, sacred Spring,
As clear as crystal glistening,
Thou stream of blessing, pure and free;
All splendour of the cherubim,
And holiness of seraphim,
Is darkness when compared with thee!
O Thou, my pattern here,
Make me thy image bear;
My all in all!
Ah teach thou me,
And let me be
All pure and holy like to thee!

Oh, gentle Jesus, as thy will
Was subject to thy Father's still,
Yea, even unto death resigned;
Ah, let me thus like thee be passive,
My heart and will to thee submissive,
Guided entirely by thy mind;
Like thee, may I be mild,
And gentle as a child,

As docile too!
Ah, teach thou me,
And let me be
Meek and obedient like thee!

"Except ye be converted," says the Saviour, "and become as little children." Surely not in all respects as little children; no, not in weakness, in ignorance, in perverseness,—we need not to "*become*" these,—but to these already possessed qualities of the little child, we must join his simple mindedness, his implicit confidence, his true heartedness, his meekness, gentleness, docility. How beautiful is the unquestioning obedience of a little child! What a living testimony to its faith in the hand that guides it! "What shall I do?" is the oft-repeated question of the child, directed to the superior wisdom in which it confides; and, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" should be ever on the lips of the child of God.

In the spiritual worshipper there will be a correspondence between the worship and the

life; he will not devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers, but he will be a living altar, and his life will be a perpetual worship. "In spirit and truth"—"truth in the inward parts." "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." The outward act may be a symbol of the inward spiritual act, or it may be the covering or disguise of a spiritual act that has no correspondence with it. The true worshipper, though he have but two mites to cast into the treasury, may cast in more than they all. The Pharisee made a long prayer, while the publican beat upon his breast, and cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" and this man went down to his house justified rather than the other. The deepest emotions of the heart are not for words. There may be more true, spiritual worship, in one sigh, than in a multitude of eloquent prayers. It is not with ready speech and fervid eloquence, but with "groanings that cannot be uttered," that the Spirit helpeth our infirmities.

Spiritual worship is not a light that is kindled and extinguished as occasion requires; it is not a lamp that is used to illumine the hour of the soul's darkness, to be put away when the natural sunshine of the spirit returns; but it is a never-dying flame on the altar; ever tending upwards, ever sending forth sweet odours of incense. But though never extinct, yet how faint, and dim, and flickering does it often become, so that we may well question with ourselves whether it be not strange fire; for the impure exhalations of the heart deaden the flame, and it needs the breath of heaven to revive it.

There can be no spiritual worship unless our hearts have become the temples of the living God, and the Saviour have entered there, and driven out worldly affections, it may be with the "scourge of small cords." Christ must dwell in our hearts by faith; a coal from the sacrificial altar must touch our lips before we can profess ourselves His willing servants, ready for any work that He appoints for us. "Lo, this hath

touched thy lips," is ever followed by a ready acquiescence in the Lord's will; and every act of obedience to the commands of God is an act of spiritual worship.

Ah, if our hearts were rightly tuned, how sweetly would they echo the deep harmony of angels' songs. But we have not yet the "golden harps," and our relaxed and broken strings make sad discord, or but feeble music, as we take up the strain—"Hallowed be thy name!" Were but our hearts and lives in unison with that first petition of the Lord's Prayer!

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." Seek we not merely a name and a place in the kingdom, but to be made *meet for the inheritance.* Let us seek, not only to insure our own entrance there, but that the concerns of the kingdom be ever uppermost in our thoughts, and the glory of the Great King be ever the aim and end of all our actions. "One thing have I desired;"—"One thing I do;" —"Let everything be done with singleness of

heart as unto the Lord, and not unto men." And if the glory of God were the all-absorbing desire of the soul; if "Hallowed be thy name," and "Thine is the glory," were to be the Alpha and Omega, including and hedging in all our petitions, how would doubts vanish, and difficulties be solved, and all our enjoyments be enhanced, by a more full and constant recognition of the source of all our blessings.

Oh, if we would but receive our common mercies,—so common that we forget to count them as mercies,—as coming immediately from the hand of our heavenly Father! If, instead of speaking of a fortunate circumstance, we would reflect on His gracious interposition on our behalf; if, instead of saying, It happened well, we would think how kindly He had cared for us!

Let us ponder for what reason the Saviour told us, that not a sparrow falls to the ground without His Father; and that the hairs of our head are numbered. Not surely to impress us alone with a sense of His omnipresence and

infinite knowledge, but that linking this with other divine teachings,—and having learned that "God is love," and that "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him,"—we might recognise His love and pity in the smallest events of our life, whether of apparent good or ill. "All things work together for good, to them that love God." Do we believe that? We acknowledge the hand of our Heavenly Father in the most conspicuous events of our life, but fail to recognise it in the minor details, which make up so large a sum in our earthly existence; we bow to the decree that levels our dearest hopes with the dust, and with chastened spirit exclaim: "Thy will be done;" while with chafed mind, and rebellious will, we fret and repine at the thorns which daily life strews about our path; and, on the other hand, while we sing, "Te Deum laudamus," we forget that, whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we should have a single eye to the glory of God.

"*Whatsoever* ye do." Let us carry this thought with us, to the labour of the desk, and the workshop, and the plough, and the drudgery of household affairs; remembering that all these may become consecrated temple service, inscribed with "Holiness to the Lord." And into our social intercourse, into the little things of ordinary life, into the insignificant details of "the common round, the daily task;" let us remember that nothing is too insignificant to be included in the "whatsoever." And let us never forget, that *doing* is inseparably connected with *being;* that there must be the principle of life in the soul; it must be "alive unto God," or there can be no desire for His glory, no true spiritual worship.

"Know ye not, that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" Who does not shrink from the fearful alternative? And if our hearts are indeed temples of the living God, how jealous should we be, lest there be any want of "truth in the inward parts;" lest the

God, who inhabits there, should behold evil and defilement lurking in secret places; lest the veil of a refined taste should cover other features than those of true religion; lest we should be beguiled by counterfeit virtues, by an habitual morality, a constitutional meekness, an esthetic devotion, while the inner man of the heart may be destitute of the heavenly graces these so closely resemble.

"Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts," says the Psalmist. There may be a fair exterior, fruits that are pleasant to the eye; but if these be not the result of the fountain of living waters, then are they but as the apples of Sodom. And if our sin-clouded eyes fail not to discern this latent evil, what must we appear in His sight before whom the heavens are not clean, and who chargeth His angels with folly? What is the clear drop of water under the microscope? and what are our purest thoughts under the penetrating glance that sees into the secret recesses of the soul? Should not the

prayer of David be ever on our lips: "Search me, O God, and try my heart: prove me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way within me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Hast thou said, "We will come unto him, and make our abode with him?" And wilt thou in very deed dwell with man upon the earth? Purify then thy temple, and make it meet for such exceeding honour and glory; and if earthly desires and vain affections would have a place there, let us hear thy voice, saying, "Take these things hence."

We are creatures of habit, is a phrase familiar to our ears, and every day's experience confirms its truth. An act, often repeated, becomes easier by each repetition, until at last there needs no fresh impulse of the mind for its performance, but it is accomplished with the dead activity of a machine. And may not the same law, which prevails also in mental acts, extend its sway into the innermost recesses of the spirit?

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all

thy heart, and soul, and strength;" powers of body and mind shall all be devoted, but first, "*with all thy heart.*" "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God;" and as surely as we "*see God,*" so surely will there be no merely habitual acts of worship and obedience, as there will be none in heaven, but every act will spring from the pure source of love to God, and an intense desire to do His will.

Pure, untainted worship will it be, when the eye, no longer dimmed with tears, shall see Him as He is; and when no more shall fall upon our ears those words, so hard to be received,—"It is expedient for you that I go away;" but faith shall be changed to sight, and the ransomed soul shall experience a plenitude of bliss, in the all-absorbing consciousness, that she is "for ever with the Lord."

For ever with Jesus; though toilsome and dreary
Our path through the desert, our feet shall soon stand
On the bright shores of Canaan; though weak now and weary,
We soon shall arrive at our own father-land.

For ever with Jesus; in glory exceeding—
Yea, 'far more exceeding' all splendours of earth;
No heart may conceive it; our finite minds needing
New vigour to measure its infinite worth.

For ever with Jesus; ineffable wonder!
The sinner and Sinless together abide;
No power shall divide them, no creature shall sunder,
The sinner is ransomed, the Sinless has died!

For ever with Jesus; no longer in sorrow,
And doubting, and darkness, and indwelling sin;
No present distress, and no fears for the morrow,
No fightings without, and no struggles within.

For ever with Jesus; no sighing or weeping;
For God from all eyes shall the tears wipe away;
We sow here in sadness, but there shall be reaping
With joy, in the sunshine of infinite day.

For ever with Jesus; what tidings supernal!
To see Him, and hear Him, and sit at His feet;
To rest in His love throughout ages eternal,
Arrayed in His righteousness, spotless, complete.

For ever with Jesus; in rapt adoration,
And intercourse sweet with our Saviour and Friend;
O glorious climax! O blest consummation
Of mercy unbounded, and love without end!

For ever with Jesus; for ever! for ever!
What fancy shall fathom the depth of that word?
No sin to annoy, and no parting to sever,
For ever! and so shall we be with the Lord.

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